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Public Health and Psychological Vulnerability

1. The general population knows and feels every hour how poor the public health service is in the USSR. The people know there is a shortage of doctors, because they must stand for hours in clinics when they need attention, and that the ability and training of the younger generation of doctors is poor. They cannot get the drugs they require. They know and complain of these matters in their talks with doctors and at times to the newspapers. They know that they can criticize, in the newspaper, everything except politics and the party line. They also know that these criticisms sometimes result in solemn investigations and perhaps the punishment of a few people, but are seldom followed by any improvement in the conditions complained about. They also know that the army, the Party, and government officials obtain far better medical service from special institutions than the general public receives. They are very bitter about the situation, and, hence, public health constitutes a field of psychological vulnerability.
2. Medical advice and information on health subjects would make excellent material for leaflets, if it were possible to effect distribution to the Soviet people. The same information is also suitable for radio programs. The subjects that might be covered with effective results in such a program include US figures on longevity and death rates, infant mortality, TB statistics, figures on other specific diseases, pictures of US hospitals, norms of nourishment in the US, including per capita consumption of meat, cereals, butter, fruit, etc, consumption of food per family per year, achievements in the control of infectious diseases, surgery and disease prevention programs. If such information could be gotten across, I believe the results might be astonishing.
3. Public health missions established in the USSR and supported by the UN could have a profound effect in cementing good will. The measures might include providing

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- 2 -

drugs, "Care" packages, hospital equipment, instruments, physicians, nurses, and especially soap. The effects might be extremely favorable, as was the work of the Hoover Commission, which is still remembered for its saving of millions of lives.

Life Expectancy in Concentration Camps

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4. [] the life expectancy to average two or three years in concentration camps in European Russia, although very occasionally men returned after spending as much as ten years in such camps. [] that the life expectancy in the Siberian camps would be somewhat less because of the prevalence of some diseases in Asiatic camps not usually found in the European camps. The principal conditions [] affecting returnees from concentration camps included malnutrition and especially scurvy, TB, heart diseases, skin diseases, and mental breakdowns.

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Moscow Central Polyclinic

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5. The Central Polyclinic in Moscow was reserved for top government and party officials, scientists, writers, embassy officials, and other especially favored groups. [] exact figures, but it contained many hundreds of beds, more than 100 resident physicians, and a big staff of feldshers, nurses, technicians, and specialists of all kinds. Outside specialists were also available for consultation. The best professors of medicine and surgery in Moscow taught there. It had a complete roster of departments, including internal medicine, surgery, gynecology, obstetrics, neurology, and other specialties. It was very well furnished with equipment of foreign origin, most of which, including such items as x-ray machines and electro-cardiographs, were of German manufacture. The service was excellent, one reason being that all employees there were better paid than in other Polyclinics. However, the excellence of this institution is no indication of the service available to the general public.

Factory Medicine

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6. [] from what I know of the men that were assigned to this work, I have no confidence in the quality of their service.

Army Recruits and Famines

7. From the beginning of World War I to 1941, [] height and weight of army recruits decreased, but [] This, I believe, was due to the fact that children were undernourished, particularly in time of famine. The physical condition of the Russian recruits in 1941 was much worse than that of men entering the old Russian army. It was especially poor compared with US soldiers. The men were small and meager, even compared to the Germans. For a great many years, such statistics were never published.
8. The famines of the early 30's adversely affected the growth, weight, height, resistance to infection, and the life expectancy of the general population. Again I have no specific figures. In all of these respects the Soviet people compare unfavorably with those in the US. I have no figures on current life expectancy in the USSR but would like very much to know what it is. I understand that mortality was especially high in the years 1946 and 1947.

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Rural Health Conditions

9. There were no organized methods for the disposal of garbage and human wastes in the rural areas other than use of the fields. The usual sources of drinking water were wells and rivers. Such waters were not chlorinated, filtered, or boiled before use. [] rural sanitation in the USSR on a par with [] read about India.

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- 3 -

10. The diseases most prevalent in the rural areas were (a) intestinal diseases of all kinds, (b) respiratory diseases, especially in winter and, (c) TB. These diseases were spread by water, food, especially milk, contact, and dirt. The population had no soap, no warm water, not enough clothing to provide a change, even for sleeping, and no guidance in sanitation.
11. Typical rural houses in the Ukraine were made of clay, in other parts of the USSR usually of wood. Both had thatched roofs and were usually white-washed. Each house had only one room for all the family activities. They had no outhouses. The more prosperous kulaks had barns for animals or grain storage, or both. The houses usually were in very small village groups. As collectivism was introduced, the managers moved whole small villages to larger groups and destroyed the buildings of the individual peasants.

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